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# U.S. may lag in bio-chemical defense plan

THE WASHINGTON TIMES

The international increase in chemical and biological weapons has outstripped both the ability of U.S. intelligence to monitor the growth and arms control accords to control it.

Those conclusions — or warnings — came from a recent classified briefing of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence by government specialists in intelligence, defense and arms control.

The committee felt that while Congress has been preoccupied with U.S. foreign policy in Central America, a new menace has come from the surge of research in genetic-engineering and chemical warfare and the apparent willingness of some large and small nations to use weapons resulting from this research.

The official said the senators were particularly troubled that a war could start, not with the much-discussed nuclear "first strike," but with a chemical-biological (CB) "first strike" against the U.S. or its European allies.

The possible use of CB weapons by terrorists for political strikes further complicates the issue.

Most defense planning is based on the assumption of a major conventional or nuclear weapons attack, and appropriate

response plans are in place. Relatively little has been done to anticipate, defend against or mitigate the effects of chemical-biological attacks, he said.

One reason for lack of chemical and biological defense planning is that the fields are relatively recent. Genetic engineering is an example. Experiments are being done by governments, as well as private interests, that have the potential for creating biological weapons that simply are not addressed in current arms control accords or in defense plans.

The use of mycotoxins or "yellow rain" in Southeast Asia and probably in Afghanistan are examples, according to an administration official. He said U.S. experts at first were at a loss to detect the mycotoxin which was finally discovered to be a poison produced from a fungus.

The Soviets have other CB weapons that are more effective for depopulating an area, he said, but the "yellow rain" is useful for terrorizing a population

because the death it causes is hideous [vomiting blood] and the preceding yellow cloud therefore spreads terror on the battlefield.

The Senate official added that there is no evidence that a capability to deliver a large-scale chemical-biological strike now exists in any of the major world powers. What is possible is that political and military leaders in Washington, D.C., for instance, could be "softened up" prior to a strike by introducing a debilitating virus into the metropolitan area.

Defense experts are aware of Soviet doctrine that calls for CB use as part of a conventional attack through the NATO nations. Soviet forces train for such warfare much more thoroughly than U.S. or other NATO powers do, and their equipment is better prepared to "button up" for fighting in a CB environment.

"It's just too difficult for arms controllers to anticipate all these technologies," the Senate official said.

"This is a serious thing that we should be talking to the Soviets about," he added.

In the 1970s the CIA and arms controllers, as part of the U.S.-Soviet policy of detente then in effect, paid relatively little attention to CB weapons because there appeared to be not much work going on in the field and the weapons that did exist were not being used.

President Richard Nixon stopped U.S. chemical weapon production lines in 1969, though the stockpiles were maintained.

Also, the 1972 biological weapons convention, signed by the United States, Soviets and others called for the destruction of all biological weapons stocks and no production of more. A Reagan administration official called it "a classic detente document. There were no verification provisions."

However, since that era of little activity in CB, things have changed. Along with research in bioengineering and other areas, CB weapons have been used

in the Iran-Iraq war, and many government officials believe that the Soviets have experimented with them in Afghanistan, at least initially, since their 1979 invasion of that country.

In Southeast Asia, where the use of "yellow rain" has been better verified, administration sources say that North Vietnam is thought to have secured mycotoxins — and training for their use — from the Soviets.

While there is no new, startling information in the briefing by "the community" as the Senate official called the CIA, defense and other specialists, the information in its worldwide context implies that the United States is in danger of being overtaken by events.

— Thomas D. Brandt

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# United States Senate

OFFICE OF THE SERGEANT AT ARMS

ROOM S-321, THE CAPITOL BUILDING

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

June 25, 1984

[redacted]  
DCI Security Committee  
Room 5E25 CIA Headquarters  
Washington, D.C. 20505

STAT

Dear [redacted]

STAT

On three separate occasions during the past two years, the U.S. Senate has met in the Senate Chamber in closed session for a code word briefing on national security issues. On each occasion, the U.S. Capitol Police, in conjunction with other intelligence agencies, has sought to secure the Chamber against electronic surveillance by an entity hostile to our government.

As you know, the present Senate Chamber was first occupied back in 1859. During the 1940's, substantial physical changes were made to the Chamber, but nothing was done then or since to ensure that this important legislative meeting room is secure from espionage operations. With the increased frequency of these code word briefings, I have been concerned that Members of the Senate might assume that the Senate Chamber can be secured for highly classified briefings. I am concerned that this is not the case, and that we have been operating under some false assumptions or assurances.

I have discussed this matter with the Majority Leader of the Senate, and he concurs with these concerns. Accordingly, he has directed me to request your assistance in making a technical assessment of the Senate Chamber to determine what steps, if any, could be taken to secure the Chamber from surveillance in espionage operations. We consider this matter to be extremely important, and trust that it will receive your prompt consideration.

I would be happy to personally discuss this matter with you if you so desire.

Sincerely,



Larry E. Smith  
Sergeant at Arms

LES:pm

**C O N F I D E N T I A L**

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